

Susannah Gent: REF narrative

Haruspex: The birth and death of a spirit guide

Haruspex is a short film that stages the birth of a spirit guide that later turns bad by revealing too much of humankind's nature. The film's three-act-structure shows the spirit guide's creation, life with the guide, and the loss of the guide.

Haruspex, works with an open ended narrative, where a lack of narrative closure opens the question of theme for the audience. By featuring two young actors engaged in a bizarre activity in a bathroom, a scenario of child abuse is hinted at. The film suggests hidden secrets and the employment of myth as a means to both reveal and hide human behaviour. The child wears a minotaur hat, and *haru*, meaning death in Greek, introduce Greek mythology, and in turn, psychoanalysis, a critical framework that draws on mythology.

Sigmund Freud notes a tendency of primitive beliefs to resurface despite our having superseded those beliefs. *Haruspex* invites speculation through the content of its narrative. As such the film both explores psychoanalytic ideas and opens questions in the audience as to the nature of the psyche, especially in relation to superstition and belief.

The aim though this approach is to sponsor reflection in the audience. This is achieved by *questioning* rather than *telling*. Although the conventional filmic narrative frequently tackles so-called difficult subjects, the closure of the story traditionally operates as to maintain a status quo and re-balance the equilibrium that the filmic conflict has developed. By attending to theme rather than story within this film the 'message' is left open and thus invites reflection. This approach is taken by Michael Haneke in 'Hidden' (Caché, 2005). Here the film makes an oblique reference to the Paris massacre of 1961, during the Algerian War. As the narrative ends without resolution, the audience is encouraged to sift over the narrative clues.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The intention of working with an open narrative is to sponsor reflection in the audience. This is achieved by *questioning* rather than *telling*. Although the conventional filmic narrative frequently tackles so-called difficult subjects, the closure of the story traditionally operates as to maintain a status quo and re-balance the equilibrium that the filmic conflict has developed. By attending to theme rather than story within my films I leave the 'message' open ended and thus invite reflection. This approach is taken by Michael Haneke in 'Hidden' (Caché, 2005). Here the film makes an oblique reference to the Paris massacre of 1961, during the Algerian War. As the narrative ends without resolution, the audience is encouraged to sift over the narrative clues.

The film can be seen on vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/293393267> password GENT

Haruspex premiered at the 65. Short Film Festival of Oberhausen, May 2019.